

portunities of knowledge and improvement which you have had and still have."¹

The Letters were written by one whose youth was spent in the study, meditation, and imitation of the classics. "If not a very profound scholar, he (Chesterfield) was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the classic authors, and was upon the whole a judicious critic."² Hence, naturally, the Letters have a somewhat similar development as have many of the conduct books. In both, emphasis is laid upon those qualities and accomplishments that will fit a youth for court life; in both, detailed instructions, admonitions, warnings, allusions, illustrations abound.....There is, however, a great difference in style and diction between the Letters and the conduct books. Chesterfield's style "is the finished expression not of rhetorical culture, but of the culture by which all that constitutes character is marked....absolutely unaffected, simple, original, and without mannerisms of any kind, it is a style which no mechanical skill can copy. In two respects the diction of Chesterfield is especially noted--in its exquisite finish, and in its scrupulous purity. It is the perfection of epistolary style, flexibly adapting itself to what is supposed or suggested--now heated, pointed, epigrammatic; now gracefully diffuse, now rising to dignity; but always natural and always easy."³ "His style eschews all unnecessary verbiage. But it was to his mastery of this art of condensation that he owes

1. Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son, p 144, Letter CXLII.

2. Life of Chesterfield, p 82.

3. op. cit., 343.